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Mahathir-Muslims

MUSLIMS LEFT BEHIND DUE TO WRONG VIEW ON NON-RELIGIOUS STUDIES, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, April 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the real reason for Muslims to be far behind is because they are constantly advised that it is their religious duty to study religion as it will gain them merit in the next world.

He said that they were not encouraged to acquire knowledge in non-religious studies as they wrongly perceive them as secular.

"Indeed parents are known to insist that their children study religion because they themselves would gain merit, and in Malaysia professionals have been known to express regret that they had chosen to go into a profession when they should have studied religion," he said when opening the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and the second general conference of the Federation of Universities in the Muslim World at the IIUM campus in Gombak here.

Dr Mahathir said to expiate what they considered to be sin, they send all their children to religious schools or to become "hafiz" (Quranic reciters).

"We know that many Muslims study various non-religious disciplines such as science and engineering but many more who should be studying these important subjects are not doing so because although they may be brilliant, they are made to believe that these are secular subjects," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that in addition, many who were studying non-religious subjects were being harassed by those who would have them devote more time to various para-religious activities.

"They are even urged to participate in activities that have nothing to do with their studies, as for example political agitation and so-called struggle over all kinds of so-called unIslamic issues. Some are prevailed upon to take part in activities said to be in the interest of the religion," he said.

A favourite approach, he said, of those who were opposed to the acquisition of non-religious knowledge was to accuse the government of promoting non-religious education or being unIslamic.

Dr Mahathir said the subjects were all labelled as secular and therefore unsuitable for Muslims to study.

"Muslim students will feel guilty if they insist on studying these subjects and they will do their best to devote more time to religion in order not to be regarded as impious by their peers and this impairs their ability to master these subjects," he said.

The prime minister said there was a great deal of confusion among Muslims regarding secularism as some Muslims tend to regard anything not about ritualistic expression of Islamic faith, about Islamic laws and Islamic theology as being secular.

"This is unfortunate because it tends to make Islam a reclusive religion, incapable of understanding and dealing with anything other than what they perceive as being religious," he said.

He said this state of affairs was doubly wrong because Islam was not just a faith to be believed in, but a way of life.

"Islam should therefore be concerned with everything that is done in daily life, whether as an individual or as a community and what we do in life is not and cannot be confined to the performance of certain religious rituals and rites only," he said.

He said Muslims should not only obtain knowledge about Islam but also

all other disciplines of science which could contribute to the well-being of Muslims, to their freedom from hegemony and oppression by their enemies.

The prime minister said Muslims were enjoined specifically to prepare with war-horses and weapons to put fear in the hearts of their enemies and to defend themselves.

"Horses and swords and bows and arrows were sufficient in the days of the Prophet. Today we need guns and tanks, fighter planes and warships and a host of other sophisticated weapons in order to deter the enemy and defend ourselves.

"But we are dependent on others, including those who look upon the Muslims as their enemies, to supply us with these defence requirements...we are not putting fear in the hearts of anyone and are certainly unable to defend ourselves effectively," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the result of this was that Muslims all over the world were oppressed, and often they were killed with impunity, expelled from their own countries to live as refugees in hostile lands for decades and centuries.

"Can we honestly say that, that their life is what is meant by the Islamic way of life," he said.

He said of course there would be some Muslims who argue that it was Allah's will that for Muslims, Allah had prepared heaven in after-life.

"Can this really be true since we have neglected a cardinal injunction of Islam to prepare ourselves with the means to strike fear in the hearts of our enemies and to defend ourselves," said Dr Mahathir.

He said there were some who believe that Muslims could never master the skills and knowledge to compete with their detractors in the invention, production and the use of modern weapons and other products.

"This is a defeatist attitude unworthy of Islam. We know very well that Muslims were superior to all others in the past in the production of weapons, other products and in their skilful usage," he said.

The prime minister said these were the reasons why there were so few Muslims in Muslim countries capable of developing their countries to the level of developed nations of the world.

"There appears to be no possibility that a Muslim country will emerge as a world power in the foreseeable future, no matter how big," he said.

Speaking on the impact of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and globalisation, he said only a handful of Muslim countries were conversant with the process of globalisation.

He said Muslim countries do not have a common stand on certain global issues as some were under obligation to the rich and may not oppose the interpretations on globalisation formulated by the rich.

"But once they have committed themselves to the WTO, they will not be able to get out of it. In the end, they will lose control over their countries and lose their independence," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Muslim world would once again be on the losing end with the dawn of the information technology era.

"Not only do we not have mastery of information technology, but we don't realise that it and globalisation that accompanies it will again result in our subjugation," he said.

He said this sad fate had befallen Muslims because the ummah (community) had forsaken the true teachings of Islam.

"We say Islam is a way of life when we mean it is a way of death. All that is happening to the Muslims of today is due to easy acceptance of teachings which are selective and which exclude much that are enjoined upon us so we can make Islam as a way of life truly beneficial to the ummah," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Muslims today were forfeiting their share in this

world and never in the history of Islam have the Muslims been so oppressed and subjected to all kinds of indignities and forced to live a life so penurious and miserable.

-- BERNAMA

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